

<b>Institution:</b> University of Oxford		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 27 – English Language and Literature		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Supporting lifelong teaching and learning of English through Open Educational Resources, and assisting diversification of the canon		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 1 January 2000-1 April 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Prof Emma Smith	Prof of Shakespeare Studies (Hertford College)	1998-present
Prof Carolyne Larrington	Prof of Medieval European Literature (St John's College)	1999-present
Prof Elleke Boehmer	Prof of World Literature in English (Wolfson College)	2007-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 1 August 2013-31 December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Great Writers Inspire (GWI) and Writers Make Worlds (WMW) are web-based Open Educational Resource platforms designed by the English Faculty and IT Services. GWI enhanced study of English at secondary level and above, providing curated resources for teachers, students, educational services and lifelong learners, informing A-level guidance, and supporting learning during lockdown. A fantasy theme deepened fan communities' appreciation of classic texts and remediations. WMW, a companion site, launched 2017, aided curriculum diversification, guiding understanding of how new Black and Asian writing is changing English literature. Beneficiaries included school literacy co-ordinators using WMW to shape learning challenges within multicultural environments.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>30+ Faculty researchers have added material to GWI in the REF period, on topics ranging from Anglo-Saxon to contemporary global English—supporting the site's mission since 2012 to engage secondary school teachers, students and life-long learners with ideas and questions galvanising university-level research. Some contributions rest on general expertise; many present new critical work, including Thomas on the vernacular poetics of Beowulf; Ashe on the birth of Romance in England; Leneghan on King Alfred; Brewer on the methodology behind creation of the <i>OED</i>; Ballaster on an unfinished play by Maria Edgeworth; McDonald on ideas of the state and communities of letters. 5 Faculty researchers have contributed new critical and biographical research to WMW.</p> <p>Three contributions are highlighted:</p> <p><b>Smith's 'Approaching Shakespeare' GWI podcasts</b> draw on a range of methodologies developed in her early publications—from <i>Five History Plays</i> (2000) to <i>Macbeth: Language and Writing</i> (2013). Asking why Hamlet is called Hamlet, for instance, enabled her to develop the history of character and psychological criticism; investigating where the political sympathies of Richard II might lie draws on new bibliographical work and on the history of performance; working with the unnecessary character of Antonio in <i>Twelfth Night</i> was a way to engage in a nexus of queer criticism, historicism and theatre. Her more recent contributions to GWI focus on textual criticism and history of the book, integrating materialist work with other critical approaches, especially performance criticism and theatre history.</p> <p>A <b>GWI 'Fantasy literature' theme</b> draws on <b>Larrington's</b> <i>The Land of the Green Man</i> (2015), exploring the folktale corpus of the British Isles in relation to land, gender, life and death, work, humans and animals, children and the future of the planet. Analysis of 19th- and early 20th-century county and regional folktale collections expanded the corpus, identifying and analyzing folklore motifs underpinning modern books and films from <i>Harry Potter</i> to Hayao Miyazaki. Writers examined include Irvine Welsh, Ted Hughes, A. S. Byatt.</p>		

**The Writers Make Worlds website** emerged from **Boehmer's** research, expanding the critical conversation about postcolonial British writing beyond an old canon dominated by Rushdie and Naipaul. *Indian Arrivals* (2015) sheds light on intercultural contacts between Indians and Britons on British soil at the height of empire, as reflected in a range of fiction, poetry and life-writing. A chapter on Indian involvement in the First World War underpins the WMW page on Kamila Shamsie. *Postcolonial Poetics* (2019) showed why writing in English from various 21st-century contexts, including southern and West Africa, and Black and Asian Britain, requires revised imaginative understanding of the English literary 'world'. Close analysis of Okri (Chs 2, 3), Philip, Shire, D'Aguiar (Ch 4), Evans (Ch. 6) et al. casts light on resistance, reconciliation, survival after terror and migration, underpinning WMW webpages on these writers including contributions by graduates (e.g. Haith). Ch. 7, on 'Spoken Word Poetry', guided the site's Performance strand. An article on 'Black British Publishing' (2018), co-written with Postdoctoral Fellow Erica Lombard, spotlighted the significance of Bernardine Evaristo, underpinning her WMW page.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- i. [Scholarly Edition, available on request] Emma Smith, *Five History Plays* (Wordsworth Editions, 2000). ISBN: 9781840221015
- ii. [Authored Book, available on request] Emma Smith, *Macbeth: Language and Writing* (Bloomsbury, 2013). ISBN: 9781472518286
- iii. [Authored Book, available on request] Carolyne Larrington, *The Land of the Green Man: A Journey through the Supernatural Landscapes of the British Isles* (I. B. Tauris, 2015). ISBN: 9781780769912. Shortlisted for the Folklore Society's Katherine M. Briggs Prize, 2016.
- iv. [Authored Book, listed in REF2] Elleke Boehmer, *Indian Arrivals, 1870-1915: Networks of British Empire* (Oxford UP, 2015). ISBN: 9780198744184. Winner of the 2016 European Society for the Study of English Book Prize for Literature in the English Language.
- v. [Authored Book, listed in REF2] Elleke Boehmer, *Postcolonial Poetics: 21st-Century Critical Readings* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). ISBN: 9783319903408
- vi. [Journal Article] Elleke Boehmer, with Erica Lombard: 'Publishing, the Curriculum, and Black British Writing Today', *Wasafiri* 34/4 (2019), 115-21.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02690055.2019.1635836>

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Great Writers Inspire - GWI (est. 2012) has **brought free online literary-critical resources to school age and adult learners around the world**, providing a **recognised model for accessible, curated open education**: 'Notable among the technology approaches adopted ... is .... syndication of recordings and metadata by RSS feeds'. Fed by the University's podcast service (podcasts.ox.ac.uk) which in turn is aggregated by services including Apple iTunes and Spotify, the site achieves 'wide circulation' (A. Lane, *Emancipation through Open Education*, 2017). [5.1.i] With technical and visual updates enhancing tablet and mobile usability, GWI had **2,089,678 unique page views and 1,443,530 visitors** between 15 July 2015 and 11 December 2020. Average usage was 8,345 unique page views per week. 68% of users were female, nearly half in the 18-24 age range. Top countries of origin were the **US 42%; UK 15%; India 9%**. (Data from IT Services, 11.12.20.)

The site has **supported the UK core curriculum for English literacy**. A top-performing essay page, 'The Lost Generation', is a set 'performance task' addressing Common Core State Standards for 'citation of textual evidence, identification and analysis of salient themes, ... development of valid written analyses and arguments' (G. Berry, *Cultivating Adult Literacy*, 2017). [5.1.ii] GWI has **aided learning of key critical and political concepts**, with 'Feminist Approaches to Literature' the second most visited essay page ('a lifeline of a site'—UK secondary student). It has **supplied specialist resources** ('Just [what] I wanted', UK undergraduate researching smallpox in literature) (site survey feedback) [5.2] and **assisted non-**

**academic professionals needing reliable literary sources**, e.g. an Irish Tour Guide trainer. The varied formats have **enabled study of English in the absence of formal support** ('I use them often for independent learning'—US student, with no set British literature) and **provided stimulus for home-schooled students** ('Me and my partner are doing a sort of "booth" on Mysticism and Animals' for Shakespeare: 'This really helped a lot!'). GWI **provided vital support for students around the world during the 2020 COVID lockdown** ('Such wonderful resources that you are offering now during the pandemic'—1<sup>st</sup>-year Indian undergraduate) [all feedback in 5.2; selected examples of institutional use at 5.1.v]

Smith's podcasts, the single most popular site section, have **supported secondary teaching and improved student engagement with Shakespeare**. Recommended by AQA Student Books for English Literature A and B [5.1.iii and iv], promoted by the School Library Association and English Media Centre, they are a recognised resource on school and HEI reading lists globally: 'Accessible ... for the non-specialist public AND advanced scholarship' (Folger Library); [5.3.ii] 'I listen over and over' (U.S. Masters student) [5.3.i]; 'my teacher mentions your podcast perhaps twice a lesson ... [Could you] sign a photograph of yourself [to] put ... in his office?' (grammar school A-level student). [5.3.iii] See selection of uptake examples [5.3.iv] **Prisoners and tutors on the Emory University, Atlanta 'Shakespeare in Prisons' programs have been helped** in the programs' 'mission to bring Shakespeare to incarcerated populations [and] instil vital skills for social re-entry': 'Approaching Shakespeare' provided 'trusted expertise', accessible 'from diffuse time zones and environments' (program tutor). [5.4] Linked podcasts recorded by TORCH during lockdown **were an alternative to live theatre** – ('If yo[u] ... just feel like you've been grounded ... listen to ... Emma Smith', *Evening Standard*) [5.5.i] — e.g. 'Shakespeare and the Plague', 19 June: **138,024 Facebook feeds, 4,257 YouTube views over 18 days**. [5.5.ii]

A recently-added Fantasy theme, co-designed by Lee (English/IT-Services) and Larrington, drew together existing Oxford iTunes podcasts by Faculty researchers and added new material. Launched 21 May 2020, the site has **engaged fan communities with literary and historical research and promoted creative remediations**. Since October 2020, the original podcasts have also been aggregated in Spotify, accruing 347 'starts', 213 'streams' to date, and 105 followers world-wide (50% female/46% male) with relatively even spread across age groups. [5.6.i] Theme users are guided to an introductory podcast 'Approaching Fantasy Literature' (Lee), then to talks on authors and collections, including recordings by writers and critics at Oxford's Summer School on Fantasy Literature (2018) assisting connectivity to their fan bases. Contributions by Larrington draw on sources uncovered in *Land of the Green Man* and creative interpretations generated for a 5-part BBC Radio 4 series *The Lore of the Land* (2015). Her prior public engagement work with fan communities, including a Hag podcast series of Audible books, 2019, Virago short-story collection, and trade book (2015) exploring the medieval sources of *Game of Thrones* (3,200 copies sold by mid-2019) [5.6.ii], helped drive engagement with the site. Larrington's tweet launching the GWI theme received **10,823 impressions and 449 engagements** [5.6.i], adding to Lee's 5,189 impressions, 108 engagements. [5.6.iii] Students, creative writers and fans report **enhanced understanding of genres and topoi and an enlarged sense of the canon**: 'cool to find out about connections between the Middle English romances and the Icelandic sagnakvæði' (student respondent to Modern Fairies podcasts) [5.7.i]; 'I highly recommend [Larrington's] 'Wolves and Winter' for anyone who enjoys reading fantasy' (award-winning Sci-fi novelist/critic) [5.7.ii]; 'wonderful' site, 'placed ... on my home page' (US general interest reader) [5.2]. The most popular content to date has been Larrington's Sylvia Townsend Warner essay (announcement tweet 3,999 impressions, 205 engagements) [5.7.iv] and the 10 'Modern Fairies' iTunes podcasts (1,015 downloads, 587 streams, by 13 December 2020 [5.7.iii]; 5,406 twitter impressions and 107 engagements by 14 December 2020) to which the Fantasy theme acts as a portal. [5.7.iv]

In October 2017, GWI was enhanced by the launch of Writers Make Worlds (WMW), dedicated to British Black and Asian writing. WMW has **modelled and supported curriculum diversification and outreach at secondary and tertiary level, providing new resources on 45 BAME British authors**: 42 critical commentaries on individual texts/authors, 20 original video

podcasts of writers in conversation. Four sections treat Approaches to Reading, Reading and Reception, Identifying with Literature, Performance and Reading, with curated links to writers' blogs, interviews and secondary material. Audience reach was aided by public readings and interviews, social media activity and a launch article in *The Conversation* (**16,783 reads**; widely read and republished in, especially, India). [5.8] Since launch, WMW has had **80,171 total pageviews, 43,181 unique visitors** from over 180 countries, including Syria, India, Pakistan, Argentina, Nigeria. 36.2% of visitors were 18–24 years old; 42.16% 25–44 years old. **19.3% were returning users.**

WMW has **improved resourcing for curriculum diversification in schools and universities.** Content with the highest pageviews correlates to performance genres, writers in the media, and critical issues in teaching and creative practice. The popularity of essays on high-profile writers—V. S. Naipaul, 3,363 views; Andrea Levy, 898; Kazuo Ishiguro, 871—is outstripped by interest in authors whose reputations are not yet matched by resource provision: Warsan Shire, 7,394 views; Moniza Alvi, 1,681; Helen Oyeyemi, 1,200; Patience Agbabi (added January 2020), 948. A concept essay 'Identifying with Literature', focusing on representation and invisibility in markets and classrooms, was a top-performing page (2,923 views), indicating strong interest in syllabus widening and 'decolonial' debates (IT-services data). **Educational support organizations have benefitted from this bridging resource between school and university English.** The English and Media Centre 'Studying English at University' webpage recommends WMW as: 'a brilliant site offering resources and ideas to support developments in diversifying the English curriculum ... [it] will give A Level students a great idea of what's happening ... at university level'. The Centre Director promoted the site to AL & GCSE teachers by Twitter, May 2019 (94 likes; 53 retweets) [5.9.i]. Indicative school and LEA take-up includes Astrea 6<sup>th</sup> Form Academy; St Neots (p.15) [5.9.ii]; and Hampshire English Home Learning (HIAS). [5.9.iii] Secondary, tertiary, and post-HE readers have been **galvanised to study writers previously unknown to them** ('reading the essay about Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie [...] has inspired me to read more of her writing and to further study postcolonial literature'—UK undergraduate; 're-educative'—Indian general reader) (feedback via GWI survey). [5.2]

**WMW has helped school literacy co-ordinators adapt learning targets to multicultural environments:** a Lead Practitioner for Academic Literacy/Oracy in Bristol, tweeted WMW as a 'Reading on challenge' (for 'a white teacher on a wholly white teaching staff which does not represent the demographic of our cohort, what work needs to be done to recognise and represent diversity in English?') [5.10.i]; another literacy lead at Key State 3 found 'exactly the kind of resource I'm looking for ... pushing to decolonise & improve our curriculum' (Twitter). [5.10.ii] Teacher feedback also indicates **benefits to more confident students pursuing independent projects:** 'many' preparing for the Cambridge Pre-U 3,500 word essay 'gravitate towards what we loosely call postcolonial writing, ... I always point them towards that website ... accessible as well as inspiring ... a great resource' (Teacher, Harris Westminster Academy). [5.10.iii]

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

### 1. Selection. GWI evidence of use.

- i. Lane, 'Emancipation through Open Education: Rhetoric or Reality?' In Blessinger, P., & Bliss, T. J. (eds.), *Open education: International perspectives in higher education*. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2016.
- ii. Berry, G., *Cultivating Adolescent Literacy: Standards, Strategies, and Performance Tasks for Improving Reading and Writing*. London: Rowan and Littlefield, 2017.
- iii. Carey, R., Fairhall, A., & Rank, T. (2015), *A/AS level English literature A for AQA. Student Book*. Cambridge: CUP, 24b.
- iv. Atherton, C., Green, A., & Snapper, G. (2015). *A/AS level English Literature B for AQA. Student Book*. Cambridge: CUP.
- v. Selected examples of use: UK (Public resources: BBC Radio 4 *In Our Time*, Aphra Behn page; English and Media Centre recommendation; 18<sup>th</sup> century Poetry Archive; Wikipedia entry on 'The Lost Generation'. U.K. Schools and universities: Lymm High School, Cheshire; New College Pontefract; St Bartholomew's School, Newbury; 'Circulating



- Enlightenment', The Andrew Millar Project, University of Edinburgh; King's College, Cambridge, archived resources for prospective undergraduates, 2017). U.S. Public resources: British Literature Wiki; Now Novel (online writing course). U.S. Colleges and universities (Alamo Colleges; Southern Connecticut State U; Grand Valley State U; Kent State U). Elsewhere in the world (Lund U, Sweden; U Waikato; New Zealand; Sultan Qaboos U, Oman).
2. All user quotations taken from GWI site survey, June-December 2020 [.xls sheets].
  3. Selections –  
Approaching Shakespeare uptake.
    - i. US Masters student, Amazon customer feedback comment-line on *This is Shakespeare*.
    - ii. Tweet - Owen Williams, Folger Institute, @owilliamsdc, 1 Apr 2020, 11:25 AM
    - iii. English Lit A-level student, Skinners' School, Tunbridge Wells, unsolicited email to Emma Smith, 21 May 2019.
    - iv. Selected examples of use: New Haven College, Australia; *Rigorous Lit* (US teacher's blog); Vanguard U, S California; Nassau Community College, New York; Penn State U teacher's blog; *Shakespeare Institute* blog; TES global educational support business; Open Culture educational media site; Free Library of Philadelphia selected online resource; r/shakespeare (Reddit); BBC Radio 4 *In Our Time* further reading for 'Is Shakespeare History?'; 'Becoming Prospera', NZ poet/actor's blog; British Council online magazine article.
  4. Sheila T. Cavanagh, "My Prison House": Teaching about Incarcerated Shakespeareans during the COVID-19 Pandemic', *The Electronic Sixteenth-Century Journal* blog 7 Jul 2020; 'Shakespeare in Prisons program' <https://shakespeare.nd.edu/service/shakespeare-in-prisons/>
  5. Evidence of uptake in 2020 (responses to COVID-19):
    - i. Newspaper article, 'So you can't go to Shakespeare's Globe ... do this instead', *Evening Standard* 22 Apr 2020.
    - ii. Shakespeare Oxford@Home broadcast data, email from TORCH, 7 Jul 2020.
  6. Fantasy audience following.
    - i. Twitter follower data and collated evidentiary emails from Dr. Stuart D. Lee, 18 Jun 2020 & 14 Dec 2020; from Carlyne Larrington, 14 Dec 2020. [Screenshots]
    - ii. Email from Bloomsbury editor, 21 Dec 2020.
    - iii. Twitter follower data and email from Dr. Stuart D. Lee (details within 6.i file)
  7. Feedback on GWI Fantasy content:
    - i. Fan post on 'Modern Fairies' Project blog <http://www.modernfairies.co.uk/blog/podcast-series-now-live>
    - ii. School of Dragons online fan forum article, citing Larrington lecture on Wolves and Winter, <http://forum.schoolofdragons.com/content/wolves-and-winter-norse-motif-analysis>
    - iii. 'Modern Fairies' podcast downloaded figures.
    - iv. Larrington Twitter data.
  8. *The Conversation* article and analytics.
    - i. Elleke Boehmer and Erica Lombard, 'British literature is richly tangled with other histories and cultures – so why is it sold as largely white and English?', *The Conversation* 16 Oct 2017.
    - ii. *The Conversation* article analytics.
  9. Evidence of Writers Make Worlds (WMW) supporting curriculum extension at school and university.
    - i. 'Studying English at University', EMC Projects page, <https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/cpd-and-consultancy/our-projects/studying-english-at-university>
    - ii. Astrea Sixth Form, St Neot's, college prospectus.
    - iii. HIAS School Improvement (Hampshire Local Education Authority) English moodle, <https://english.hias.hants.gov.uk/course/view.php?id=612>
  10. Twitter responses:
    - i. @TerraGlowach (611 followers), 6 Jun 2019, 7:07 PM.
    - ii. @jcablackboard (272 followers), 28 May 2019, 4.59PM.
    - iii. Email from Teacher of English Literature, Harris Westminster Academy, 16 Jun 2020.